



## **Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment**



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### **GULF OF MAINE HABITAT RESTORATION STRATEGY RELEASED Projects Identified for Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Canada**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officials today released a comprehensive plan for state and local habitat restoration experts to follow as they prioritize and restore coastal and marine habitat throughout the Gulf of Maine in the coming years. Known as the Gulf of Maine Habitat Restoration Strategy, the 24-page plan was made public at the Gulf of Maine Summit in New Brunswick, Canada. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The strategy document identifies resources of regional significance, prioritizes restoration projects and promotes habitat restoration at a regional level. It was developed by the Gulf of Maine Council, an assembly of resource agencies, including NOAA, non-profit organizations, tribal groups and university scientists from both the United States and Canada.

“This summit and the comprehensive plan developed are examples of the dedicated efforts to create, improve, and protect our nation's coastal wetlands,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “The restoration efforts in the Gulf of Maine support President Bush's strategy to expand and protect our nation's wetlands on a regional level.”

“Implementing this cooperative conservation partnership strategy will help restoration practitioners focus limited resources on the highest priority projects, and it will allow those involved to work on our individual state and provincial needs while meeting the common goals that will improve the health of the entire Gulf of Maine ecosystem,” said Rolland Schmitten, director of NOAA's Habitat Restoration Office.

Potential restoration projects identified by the Council with large-scale environmental benefits for the Gulf of Maine include:

- Evaluating enhanced fish passage on the Penobscot River in Maine to restore Atlantic salmon.
- Reestablishing flow between riverine and estuarine systems in Ipswich, Massachusetts to improve water quality and ecosystem health.

- Expanding eelgrass restoration efforts in New Hampshire to enhance fishery habitat.
- Increasing tidal flow upstream of undersized road culverts on Cheverie Creek in Cheverie, Nova Scotia to restore a 30-acre saltmarsh.

The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program helped in the development of the strategy through its cooperative partnership with the Gulf of Maine Council and its work with the Council's Habitat Restoration Subcommittee. This Partnership provides technical and financial assistance for restoration projects throughout the region. This strategy and the subcommittee's activities support the Gulf of Maine Council's restoration objective to restore 3000 acres of coastal and marine habitats by 2006.

The Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership was established in 2001 to solicit restoration projects in the Gulf to be funded using a competitive process. A review team with representatives from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and the NOAA Restoration Center evaluate grant proposals annually. To date, the partnership has funded 33 projects for a total of \$766,035, with roughly \$3.6 million from other sources. This partnership has been an effective method of restoring regionally significant habitat in the Gulf of Maine.

The NOAA Restoration Center uses a community-based restoration program to work with organizations and governments to support locally driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas. NOAA funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities and provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. Since 1996, over 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the Community-based Restoration Program, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Copies of the Gulf of Maine Habitat Restoration Strategy are available from Jon Kachmar, Maine Coastal Program, (207) 287-1913, [jon.kachmar@maine.gov](mailto:jon.kachmar@maine.gov). Copies are also available in PDF format on the Gulf of Maine Council's Web site at <http://www.gulfofmaine.org>.

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